

Appomattox Court House

National Historical Park

Planning Newsletter 2

Fall/Winter 2003

Please Join Us

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

We are pleased to share this second newsletter with you and to ask for your continued assistance as we develop a draft General Management Plan for Appomattox Court House. The plan will provide guidance for the park's overall management and determine how the park will address resource protection, visitor use, and park operations over the next 15 to 20 years.

First, I would like to thank all of you who have provided comment and feedback in the public meetings, focus groups sessions, and other gatherings in the first phase of the project, and through ongoing correspondence, informal meetings and conversations. Your ideas, issues and concerns have been informative and substantial. We heard, for example, that:

- The park is recognized and valued for its national significance. The park is for all Americans to learn about, understand and appreciate. However, more work is needed for the park to appeal to a broader audience.
- The park's story is not just about the surrender. The surrender events should be placed in the context of the Civil War and its outcomes, and the relevance of the events to today's Americans presented.

- The park is valued in the community for its relevance to local history and the contributions that local residents have made to the development of the park.

- Areas of common interest between the park and community, as well as the region, include broadening the park story and lengthening visitor stays.

Second, I am seeking your input on initial ideas for managing the park. Drawing from comments received, the results of a variety of studies, and the work of the planning team, we have created a range of initial management ideas or concepts. These are presented on page 5 of the newsletter. Please view these as 'works in progress' that will be revised as we receive feedback on the management directions the park is considering. New ideas may be added and old ones dropped or combined during the next step, when we develop the alternatives that will be presented in the draft plan. Anchoring the management concepts are the draft statements of park purpose and significance (page 3), and the interpretive themes (page 4).

We invite your continued participation in this planning process that will set the park's future direction. Please refer to the back page for ways to convey your views to us. Thank you for your time and effort.

Reed Johnson
Superintendent

In April 1865, generals Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant met in the rural county seat of Appomattox Court House to agree to the surrender terms that effectively ended the Civil War. Today, the village of Appomattox Court House and surrounding rural landscape are preserved within the 1,770 acre national park. The photo above is of the village viewed from the west: from left to right are the Tavern Guesthouse and Clover Hill Tavern, the county courthouse and the McLean House, where Lee and Grant met. Printing presses were set up in the Clover Hill Tavern for the processing of paroles for Confederate soldiers. A closer view of the guesthouse and tavern is shown in the photo to the left.



What We've Learned

The following is a sampling of the results of studies and investigations that have helped us to better understand how visitors experience the park, the range and condition of its natural resources, and the full array of cultural resources.

Pre-surrender battles

The large tracts in the northwestern part of the park added in the early 1990s, and land between the Town of Appomattox and the park's current boundary, were the scene of military actions in the hours preceding the surrender. The study of troop movements in the battles of Appomattox Court House and Appomattox Station has identified related resources and expanded the story of how two opposing armies descended upon the village of Appomattox Court House.

Commemorative features

Monuments and markers within the park are visible evidence of the ways Americans have responded to the end of the Civil War and to the park's important place in American history. Spanning a broad time period beginning in 1865, the commemorative features include local efforts at private commemoration, U.S. War Department tablets marking the end of the Civil War and the U.S. Department of the Interior's focus on the village landscape as a fitting setting for the surrender. These features represent post-Civil War layers of history that must be considered in planning for the visitor experience and for resource protection.

Archeological investigations

The park contains resources reflecting the 19th century development of a rural crossroads within a surrounding agricultural community as a county seat. Archeological research and site investigations are helping to fill out the story of the village and its residents before, during and after the Civil War.

Natural resources

Ongoing studies of mammals, vegetation, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians have shown that the park supports diverse wildlife and plant communities. The mole salamander and a Montane seepage swamp plant community have been found in the park; both are rare in the Piedmont area of Virginia. The water quality of the Appomattox River and its tributaries within the park is generally good.

Route 24

VA Route 24 is the major travel route within and through park boundaries. In nearly a dozen locations along the three mile stretch of the roadway through the park, local roads intersect with the highway, motorists access interpretive site parking areas, and pedestrians cross the road. The differing travel speeds for park staff, park visitors and through traffic resulting from this mix of traffic were investigated in a traffic safety and engineering study, which identified five intersections with inadequate stopping sight distances, among other findings.

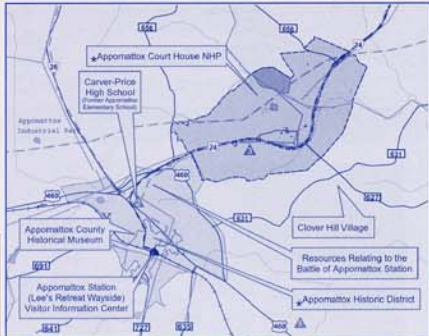
Views

Scenic views add to the visitor's enjoyment of the park and reveal the topography and landscape features that played a role in the events of April 1865. An analysis of scenic views identified the areas that are visible from eight observation points in the park. Two key findings were that the visible areas are contained to some extent within the park boundary and that current low density development around the park protects other visible areas, particularly those that can be seen from the historic village area. The plan will address the permanent protection of existing views from the village.

THE PARK IN CONTEXT

Within Appomattox County and the larger region, there are opportunities to foster connections between the park and related sites, expand the visitor experience and reach out to new audiences. This map shows existing and future opportunities in the vicinity of the Town of Appomattox. Among them are:

- Lee's Retreat Civil War Trail automobile route, following the Appomattox Campaign.
- The Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail, connecting sites related to the struggles that African-Americans engaged in to gain a quality education in southside Virginia.
- The proposed regional trail system in Region 2000's Greenways and Blueways Plan.



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Park Purpose and Significance

The statements of purpose and significance are critical elements of the planning process, guiding priority-setting for resource preservation, interpretive and educational programs, and other visitor opportunities. They set the framework for the actions that will be proposed in the draft General Management Plan, and are the anchor for the management ideas on page 5. These are in draft form for review and comment.

A statement of the park's purpose explains why the park was established as a unit of the national park system. In reconfirming the park's purpose, the planning team analyzed the enabling legislation for the park and its legislative history, and drew from current scholarly understandings and interpretation.

A statement of significance takes into account the intent of Congress, the unique resources contained within the boundary of the park, the wide range of stories associated with the site's history, and its relationship to similar park units. Understanding what is nationally significant about the park helps managers make decisions that preserve the resources and values that were the basis for its establishment.



The Scholars' Roundtable in March 2001 brought together historians, NPS staff and representatives of key related organizations to explore the significance of the park.

The Purpose of Appomattox Court House NHP is:

- To commemorate the surrender of General Robert E. Lee to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and the effective termination of the Civil War brought about by the Appomattox Campaign from March 29-April 12, 1865 and to honor those engaged in this great conflict.
- To preserve and protect those park resources, including landscape features, historic structures, archeological sites, cemeteries and monuments, archives and collections that are related to the Appomattox Campaign, the surrender and its legacy.
- To provide opportunities for the public to learn about the Civil War; the people affected, the Appomattox Campaign and its culmination in the surrender at Appomattox Court House; and the beginning of peace and national re-unification.

Appomattox Court House NHP is important as:

- the site of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia under General Robert E. Lee to Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, commander of the Union forces, April 9-12, 1865, effectively marking the end of the Civil War. The village of Appomattox Court House and the surrounding landscape have exceptional integrity and are intrinsic to understanding the surrender and subsequent events. In combination with park archives and artifacts, they form an outstanding assemblage that contributes markedly to the public's awareness of how these events helped to shape the military, political and social outcomes of the Civil War; and
- the site of the Battle of Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, which led directly to the surrender. Park lands display the largely unaltered terrain of the battle and key topographic features that influenced its outcome, and contain the remains of the domestic and agricultural sites associated with the engagement; and
- the site where re-unification of the nation commenced with the terms of the surrender and the magnanimous actions of Union and Confederate soldiers at Appomattox Court House. The rural setting evokes a timeless sense of place for the consideration of these events. The park's landscape and structures, commemorative features, archeological resources, archives and artifacts provide an opportunity for the public to understand the different conceptions and meanings that the end of the Civil War has taken on through time.



Archaeologist Mark Kostro works at the Academy Dwelling House site. The reconstructed McLean House is in the background.

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